

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 00033 041538Z

ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NEAE-00 SSM-03 SY-05 MCT-01 OC-06 CCO-00

IO-13 DHA-02 ORM-02 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00

CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05

PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 SCA-01 EUR-12 OMB-01 USSS-00

SCS-03 A-01 OPR-02 AID-05 /107 W

-----041541Z 068161 /46

O 041444Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2665

INFO AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 0033

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, ASEC, MOPS, LE, SY

SUBJECT: EXPLOSION IN EAST BEIRUT

1. SUMMARY: A VERY LARGE EXPLOSION OCCURRED IN THE PHALANGE NEIGHBORHOOD OF ASHRAFIYAH LATE JAN 3, KILLING ABOUT 50 AND WOUNDING A REPORTED 100 PERSONS. PHALANGIST RANK-AND-FILE ARE, AS OF MID-JAN 4, IN A STATE OF HIGH AGITATION, ESTABLISHING ROADBLOCKS AND FIRING WEAPONS IN CHRISTIAN EAST BEIRUT. NO EVIDENCE SO FAR ON THE CULPRITS, BUT CHRISTIANS SUSPECT EITHER THE SYRIANS, COMMUNISTS OR THE PALESTINIANS. SOM UNCONTROLLED CHRISTIAN RETALIATION MAY OCCUR, ONCE THE DEAD ARE BURIED. END SUMMARY.

2. AT 1710 LOCAL JAN 3, A HUGE EXPLOSION OCCURRED IN A STREET OF THE EAST BEIRUT NEIGHBORHOOD OF ACCAOUI, IN THE CHRISTIAN STRONGHOLD OF ASHRAFIYAH, IN FRONT OF  
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PAGE 02 BEIRUT 00033 041538Z

PHALANGIST MILITIA HEADQUARTERS. AS OF LATEST REPORTS, OVER 50 PERSONS WERE KILLED AND PERHAPS 100 INJURED, INCLUDING AT LEAST SEVEN PHALANGE "SKS" SECURITY TROOPS KILLED AND ABOUT EIGHT WOUNDED. ONE US EMBASSY EMPLOYEE LIVING NEARBY WAS SLIGHTLY INJURED.

3. EXPLOSION WAS SET OFF BY DYNAMITE, SOME 50 KILOGRAMS,

ACCORDING TO MOST ACCOUNTS. ACCORDING TO VARIOUS ACCOUNTS, THE EXPLOSIVES WERE IN AN AUTOMOBILE, IN A HOLE UNDERGROUND, OR IN A "MAZOUT" FUEL TANKER. IN ANY CASE, THE EXPLOSION REPORTEDLY TOUCHED OFF A MAZOUT TANKER FIRE WHICH INCREASED THE DEATH AND DESTRUCTION. IN ADDITION TO INJURIES TO PERSONS, SOME 50 VEHICLES AND A NUMBER OF BUILDINGS IN THE AREA WERE DAMAGED.

4. AS OF THIS TIME WE HAVE HEARD OF NO REPEAT NO EVIDENCE POINTING TO THE CULPRITS. A NUMBER OF ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING THE PHALANGE, THE GOL INTERNAL SECURITY FORCES, THE LEBANESE ARMY "ATTORNEY OF THE MILITARY COURT" AND THE SYRIAN ASF, ARE INVESTIGATING.

5. DESPITE (OR PERHAPS BECAUSE OF) THE ABSENCE OF HARD EVIDENCE, SPECULATION IS RUNNING RIFE ON WHO WAS RESPONSIBLE. CHRISTIANS GENERALLY SEEM TO BELIEVE THAT RADICAL PALESTINIAN GROUP, THE SYRIAN GOVERNMENT OR COMMUNISTS ARE RESPONSIBLE. PHALANGIST "VOICE OF LEBANON" AT 1415 LOCAL JAN 4 SUGGESTED DEED MAY BE WORK OF "SABOTEURS...NOT EVEN EXCLUDING ISRAELI AGENTS." (COMMENT: THIS MAY REFLECT A DELIBERATE EFFORT BY THE PHALANGE LEADERSHIP TO DEFUSE THE SITUATION.)

6. SOME REPORTS INDICATE PHALANGIST GROUPS ARE ON THE VERGE OF GOING ON A RAMPAGE. THEY HAVE ALREADY ESTABLISHED A NUMBER OF ROADBLOCKS, SET BURNING TIRES IN THE STREETS OF ASHRAFIYAH, AND ARE SHOOTING WEAPONS  
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PAGE 03 BEIRUT 00033 041538Z

INDISCRIMINATELY INTO THE AIR. THERE HAVE BEEN UNCONFIRMED REPORTS OF KIDNAPPINGS. PEOPLE ARE STAYING OFF THE STREETS, AND PEOPLE FROM WEST BEIRUT ARE POSTPONING PLANNED VISITS TO THE EAST. IT IS WIDELY EXPECTED THAT, AFTER THE MANY FUNERAL SERVICES TODAY, JAN 4, UNCONTROLLED ELEMENTS OF THE PHALANGE AND PERHAPS ALSO OF THE REMNANTS OF THE LEBANESE ARMY AT YARZE MAY ATTEMPT SOME KIND OF RETALIATION, PERHAPS AGAINST THE SYRIANS, THE PALESTINIANS, OR BOTH. SITUATION IS NOT HELPED BY A LATE REPORT ACCORDING TO WHICH FOUR COMMUNIST ACTION ORGANIZATION MEMBERS IN A VEHICLE KILLED FOUR CHRISTIANS NEAR BOURG HAMMOUD JAN 4, THEN WERE THEMSELVES APPREHENDED BY PHALANGISTS AND TURNED OVER TO THE ASF.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Type:** TE  
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**Review Markings:**  
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